

CLERK: Mr. President, Legislative Bill 595 was a bill introduced by the Public Health Committee and signed by the members thereof. (Read title to LB 595.) The bill was read on January 4th of this year. It was referred to the Public Health and Welfare Committee. It was advanced to General File, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT: Senator Richard Lewis.

SENATOR R. LEWIS: Mr. President, members of the Legislature, this bill is an effort to provide additional eye care by the optometrists and more especially in those areas where they do not have access to ophthalmologists or more advanced eye health care. I do support this bill, LB 595, which was brought to our committee which was sponsored by the committee and came out of the hearing without a dissenting vote, as I recall. The support for this bill was from throughout the state. We had witnesses from pretty much all over the state. This bill has been reviewed by the State Board of Health and approved without a dissenting vote as being desirable public health procedure. This bill was introduced by the committee with all members of the committee signing. It was passed out of the committee without a dissenting vote and it did have extensive testimony so I think it had a fair and adequate hearing. The Board of Health was contacted by the opponents of the bill and asked to change their policy position but after hearing the presentation the board maintained its previous position of approval. There are specific built-in limitations written into the bill. Surgery, for instance, is specifically prohibited in the bill, line twelve, page two, and the drugs that this permits are restricted to a diagnostic and topical use only and topical means applied only to the surface of the eye that's being examined. I think this provides a means whereby that the optometrists can make a more thorough, a more complete examination. They can dilate the pupil. They can be more able to detect some malfunction or something within the eye that needs attention. They are not permitted in this bill to do any more than just to make diagnostic evaluations. They then in turn must send this patient if he needs additional treatment, then this patient will be referred on to an ophthalmologist where most of the opposition has come from. It is my feeling that perhaps they feel that this is an encroachment upon their field and I don't think this is true. I think this is just going to provide a better service to those people, especially in the rural areas because the ophthalmologists are concentrated very generally in the eastern part of the state, so that I would certainly ask your support of LB 595.

PRESIDENT: Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: Mr. President, Senator Stoney moves to indefinitely postpone LB 595.

PRESIDENT: Senator Stoney.

SENATOR STONEY: Mr. President, members of the Legislature, since placing that motion on the desk, I feel that this is an important measure and one that we should consider and it should either be voted up or down so I would like to have unanimous consent at this time to withdraw that motion.

PRESIDENT: All right, Senator Rasmussen.